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GUIDE TO

# EGYPT





# GUIDE TO EGYPT



**MICHAEL MARCH**

Highlights for Children

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On the cover: The world-famous ancient pyramids with a camel caravan in the foreground

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△ **The Egyptian flag**

The red and black bands and the eagle represent Egypt's struggle to become a republic. The white band represents a bright future for the country.

## EGYPT AT A GLANCE

Area 385,229 square miles (997,739 square kilometers)

Population 78,866,635

Capital Cairo, population 7,438,376

Other big cities Alexandria (population

3,693,376), Port Said (533,299),

Aswân (245,203), and Luxor (180,592)

Highest mountain Mount Catherine,  
8,652 feet (2,637 meters)

Longest river Nile, the world's longest  
river, 4,160 miles (6,690 kilometers);  
section crossing Egypt 650 miles (940  
kilometers)

Largest lake Lake Nasser, 2,300 square  
miles (6,000 square kilometers)

Official language Arabic



▽ **Egyptian stamps** Some of the pictures on these stamps depict artifacts from Egypt's glorious past. Others show that today Egypt is a modern Islamic state.



◁ **Egyptian money** These are two Egyptian banknotes. Egypt's currency is based on the Pound, written as EE. There are 100 piastres to the pound.





## THE GIFT OF THE NILE

**E**gypt is located in the northeast corner of Africa. It is a large country—about as big as Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas put together. Nearly all of this land is hot and dry.

Most of Egypt is desert. In the spring, dusty winds, called *khamseen*, blow across the country from the Sahara Desert. In the summer temperatures are very hot—usually 95° to 100°F (35°–38°C). In spite of its harsh climate, people have lived here for thousands

of years. They have survived because of the Nile River. The world's largest river brings fresh water and life to the desert.

The river flows from south to north across Egypt. For centuries the Nile has flooded, leaving rich soil along its banks. People farm along the fertile river valley.

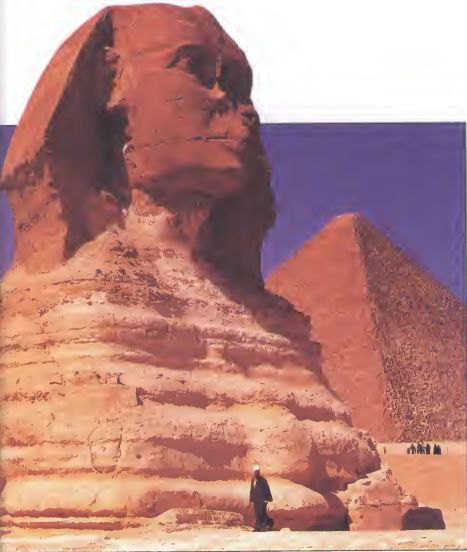
The Nile splits into many branches as it nears the Mediterranean Sea. This region is called the Nile Delta.



▷ **The Sphinx and the Great Pyramid** The Sphinx was built to honor Khafre, the son of Khufu, a pharaoh who lived nearly 5,000 years ago. These monuments are located at Giza, near the modern city of Cairo.

◁ **Faiyûm Oasis in the Western Desert** Water holes like this are rare. The Faiyûm's water comes from ancient canals linking it with the Nile. Palm trees, cotton fields, and orchards grow here. Faiyûm Oasis is located 50 miles (80 kilometers) from Cairo.





One of the world's oldest civilizations grew up on the banks of the Nile. More than 5,000 years ago, great kings called pharaohs ruled here. They built palaces along the river. Many ancient monuments are still standing.

Arabs became rulers of Egypt around A.D. 640. Today Egypt is an Arab republic with a president instead of a king. Most Egyptians are Muslims — followers of the Islamic religion.



△ A boy by the Nile in the desert. He wears a light-colored, loose head covering, shirt, and long robe to keep cool in the hot climate.

Air-conditioned trains run between Egypt's cities. You can get to smaller places by bus. You can travel up the Nile in comfort on a cruise ship, or step back in time and hire a *felucca* — a traditional Arab sailboat.

For the tourist, Egypt offers much to see and do. You can visit ancient temples and palaces, take a camel ride across the desert, buy gifts in bustling markets, and scuba dive to explore coral reefs teeming with fish.



## CITY OF VICTORY

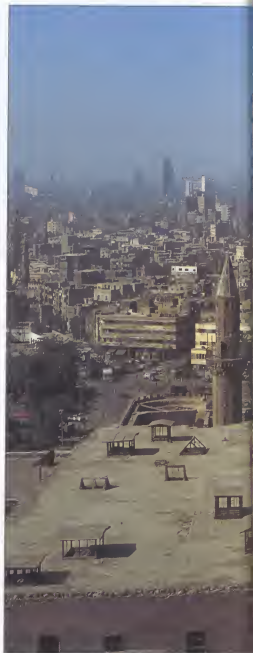
**E**gypt's historic capital, Cairo, lies on the Nile River, at the tip of the Nile Delta. It is the largest city in Africa. More than a fifth of Egypt's population live here. The country's government is here, too. People say that anything important that happens in Egypt happens in Cairo.

Cairo was built over thousands of years. Its name comes from the Arabic word *al Qahira*. It means City of Victory. Some parts of the city existed long before the Arabs came here. A carved pillar of stone that was built by the pharaohs about 3,000 years ago still stands in one northern suburb. The buildings in Cairo show how the city has been ruled. There are more than 1,000 mosques in the city. But there are also Roman ruins next to modern skyscrapers, museums, and office buildings.

Traveling in Cairo is not difficult, but the buses can be very crowded. Traffic jams on the streets are common. It is easier to travel by minibus or taxi or to take the subway. The subway station names are written in English and Arabic. Many sights are a short walk from the center of the city.

Bazaars and markets are exciting places to shop. You can buy traditional goods, such as copper and brass coffee sets, gold and silver jewelry, wooden chessboards, and tapestries. Here, the shops and market stalls do not have fixed prices. You must bargain for what you buy. Begin by offering about half of what you want to pay.

Cairo has many restaurants. You can try a variety of Egyptian dishes, such as *ful medames* (mashed beans served with lemon juice and spices). You can also eat Greek and many other foreign foods such as Mexican and Indian.



► **The crowded skyline of modern Cairo** The pear-shaped domes of the mosques contrast with the modern skyscrapers.

▽ **Fruit and vegetable market** Egypt's fruits are among the best in the world. They include oranges, figs, melons, apricots, and mangoes.



▽ **Crowded buses in the Cairo rush hour** Buses are packed with riders—inside and out.





## MUMMIES, MARKETS, AND MOSQUES

**T**he Egyptian Antiquities' Museum in Cairo is world famous. Here you will find thousands of priceless objects from the time of the pharaohs. These include statues, vases, jeweled ornaments, and paintings.

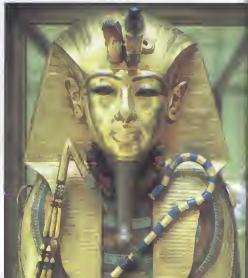
The highlight of the visit is the vast collection of treasures from the tomb of Tutankhamen. King Tut, as he is often called, was nine years old when he became pharaoh. He died at the age of eighteen.

When a pharaoh died, people removed the inner organs from the body. They used special mixtures and bandaged the body to keep it from rotting. The process is known as embalming. The ancient Egyptians put the body, or "mummy," into a set of beautifully decorated coffins. These were placed in a stone coffin called a *sarcophagus*. They laid the sarcophagus in a tomb along with the pharaoh's treasures.



◁ The al-Azhar Mosque  
The tall towers are called minarets. From here, the *muezzin* calls Muslims to prayer.

▽ Beaten-gold innermost coffin of Tutankhamen The boy-king is made to look like Osiris, the ancient Egyptian god of the dead.



▽ **A Cairo street scene** The arched gate of the *Bab Zwayla* is at the end of the street.



The Khan el-Khalili is the best-known shopping district in Cairo. The bazaars sell everything from silks and gold jewelry to perfumes and spices. Behind the shop fronts, people are busy in their workshops. They hammer metal, dye cloth, and carve wood to make the goods they sell. You can approach the Khan from a crowded narrow street called the Muski. But be careful as you go!

Men pushing carts shout out warnings as they hurry through the street. Traders sell salted fish and water flavored with licorice.

The al-Azhar Mosque and University are nearby. You must take off your shoes before going into the mosque. The university was founded in the year A.D. 971. It may be the oldest university in the world. Students from many other countries come here to study.



## FORTS AND PYRAMIDS

**O**ld Cairo, or Misr-el-Qadima, is one of the oldest parts of the city. This district was founded by the Persians when they invaded Egypt nearly 2,500 years ago. In about A.D. 100, the Romans built a fortress here. At that time, some of the first Christians lived in Old Cairo. Christians in Egypt today are known as Coptic Christians. They have their own Bible and their own churches. The lovely "Hanging Church," built over the old

Roman fort, is a marvelous place to visit.

The Pyramids of Giza stand on the west bank of the Nile. The pyramids contain the royal tombs of some of the pharaohs and their queens. If you like climbing, you can explore the royal burial chambers.

The Great Pyramid is the biggest of all. Originally 482 feet (147 meters) high and 756 feet (230 meters) square, it now stands 450 feet (140 meters) high. The Great Pyramid was built nearly 4,500 years ago. It is made from more than two million big blocks of stone. The stones fit together so well that you cannot squeeze a knife blade between them. To this day, no one knows how the ancient Egyptians managed to build anything so huge.

The Sphinx, the large statue with the body of a lion and the head of a man, is another puzzle. It is at least as old as many pyramids, but no one really knows when it was built.

Memphis, the ancient capital of Egypt, is about 20 miles (30 kilometers) to the southwest of Cairo. Not much of Memphis remains today. There are more tombs of pharaohs nearby at Saqqâra. The huge Step Pyramid of Djoser, the oldest pyramid of all, is also there.

◀ **Cairo's Muhammad Ali Mosque** This beautiful building stands inside the walls of the Citadel. This fortress was built by Saladin, ruler of Egypt in the 12th century A.D.







◀ **The Step Pyramid of Djoser** It was designed by the pharaoh's chief architect, Imhotep. He began the age of pyramid building around 2630 B.C.

▽ **The Manial Palace, Rôda Island, Cairo**  
The building mixes Western and Eastern architectural styles.





## EGYPT'S BACKBONE

**F**armland is very scarce in Egypt. Most lies either in the fertile strip of the Nile Valley or in the Nile Delta region. About two-thirds of the people here work on the land. The farmers are called *fellahin*.

Ever since Egyptians first settled on the banks of the Nile, the fellahin have been the most important workers in the country. They once depended on the river bursting its banks and flooding the valley. The floods occurred in summer. When the water drained away, it left mud and sand behind, making the land fertile. The Nile flooded its banks nearly every year. When it did not, the farmers faced a serious problem. They could not grow enough food to feed Egypt's people.

To solve this problem the Aswân High Dam was completed in 1970. The dam and many canals provide the water the farmers need. Even so, many farmers still use ancient methods for lifting water from the Nile onto their land. Some villages have water piped to each house. In other places, people have to do their washing in the river.

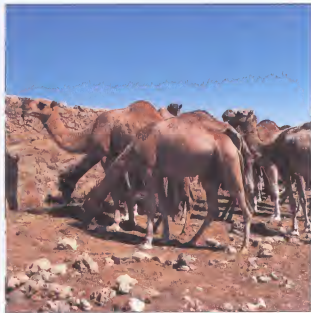
It looks as if life has changed very little over the centuries. Flat-roofed, brightly painted mudbrick houses are clustered around narrow roads and alleyways. Chickens, goats, and water buffalo wander freely. Pigeons are kept in coops for their meat. From an early age, girls learn to cook, bake bread, and feed the animals. Boys are taught to build houses, plow, sow seeds, and harvest crops.

Farmers have grown wheat in the Nile Valley since the days of the pharaohs. They have also grown sugarcane since medieval times, but the most important crop is cotton. (Egypt sells much of its cotton to foreign countries.) Beans, rice, and potatoes also grow in the Nile Valley.

### ▷ Old and new farming methods

For hundreds of years, fellahin have used oxen to pull plows. With the help of the government, today's farmers can use modern machinery like tractors.

▽ **Camels in a desert town** Camels are used to carry goods in the desert.







◁ **Two fellahin by an irrigation well** Some farmers still use animals to drive simple machines to get water from deep within the earth.





## TEMPLES AND TOMBS

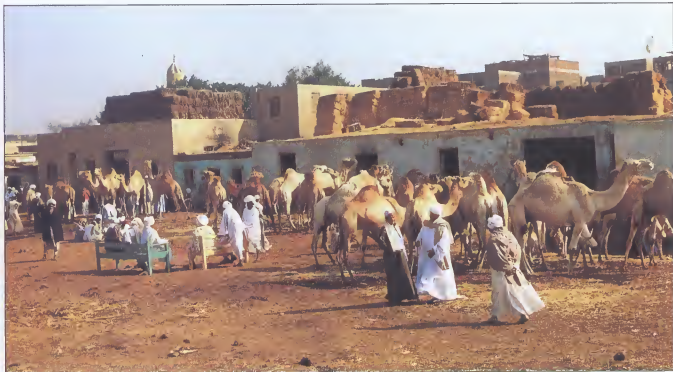
**Q**ena is a small town in southern Egypt. Aswân is Egypt's southernmost city. And between Qena and Aswân, there are more ancient monuments than anywhere else in the world.

The ancient city of Thebes was once the capital of Egypt. Most of it is buried beneath the modern city of Luxor. At the heart of this dusty place, you will find the dug-out ruins of a great temple. It was built by the pharaoh Amenhotep III. Pharaoh Ramses II later made the temple bigger. Its towering gateways were once plated with gold. The

walls were covered in marble with gold and silver decorations. The temple is more than 3,000 years old.

Nearby is the Avenue of Sphinxes. This wide pathway is named for the stone statues that stand along its sides. The avenue once connected the temple of Luxor with the Karnak Temple. Today only part of it remains.

It took about 1,300 years to build the Karnak Temple. Within this walled temple is the Temple of Amun. It has high gateways, a massive hall with rows of stone columns, and huge stone statues.





❖ **The Obelisk (center) of Queen Hatshepsut** It is located at the Temple of Amun in Karnak. Hatshepsut was Egypt's only female pharaoh.

The pharaohs of Thebes were buried on the opposite bank of the Nile. They were hidden away in rock tombs in the Valley of the Kings. It was hoped that their tombs would be safe from robbers. Sadly, most of the tombs were robbed of all their treasures long ago. You can visit the royal tombs, including Tutankhamen's tomb.

The old town of Kôm Ombo lies about 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of Luxor. The ruined temple here contains mummified animals such as crocodiles. Nearby Darâw is famous for its camel market.

◁ **Camel market** Buyers and sellers gather for the day's business. The camels are brought to Egypt from Sudan. Young animals are sold for riding or to carry cargo. Older camels are sold for meat.

▷ **Ancient temple at Luxor, by the Nile** The temple was discovered in the 1800s under 20 feet (6 meters) of rubble. At the back of the site, on the right, is the mosque of Abu el-Haggag.





## MONUMENTS OLD AND NEW

**F**rom Aswân town, you can hire an Arab *felucca*, or boat, to take you across to the west bank of the Nile. A short uphill ride on a camel brings you to the beautiful ruins of the Monastery of Saint Simeon. It was built by Coptic Christians.

Aswân, like Kôm Ombo, is the home of the dark-skinned Nubians. Their ancestors lived at the same time as the pharaohs. In fact, some of the later pharaohs were Nubians themselves.

Much of the old Nubian homeland now lies under water. When the Aswân High Dam was built across the Nile in the 1960s, the valley behind the dam was flooded. A huge man-made lake formed. Gamal Abdel Nasser was president of Egypt at that time, and the lake is named after him. The Aswân High Dam took ten years to build. The dam controls the amount of water flowing along the Nile Valley, so that farmland does not dry up. The dam also has giant turbines that are turned by water and provide much of Egypt with electricity.

The Temple of Abu Simbel is one of Egypt's most famous temples. It was built in two parts by Ramses II in about 1250 B.C. to honor himself and his queen. In the 1960s, when the Aswan High Dam was under construction, these huge sandstone monuments were cut up into blocks and rebuilt on higher ground. This was done to save this ancient treasure from the rising waters of the lake.

▷ **An Aswân village** Houses of mudbrick and wattle (woven sticks and branches) are crowded around a dusty square.



▽ **Island near Aswân**  
A *felucca* passes  
Elephantine Island in  
the Nile River. The Agha  
Khan's tomb stands on  
a distant hill on the  
west bank of the river.



◁ **The Temple of Abu Simbel**  
Four statues of  
Ramses II, two of which  
are seen here, were built  
at the temple site. They  
are all 65 feet (20 meters)  
high.







## CITY BY THE SEA

**A**lexandria is Egypt's biggest port. It sits on the Nile Delta and the Mediterranean Sea. The city is named for Alexander the Great who conquered Egypt in 332 B.C. He gradually turned the small fishing village here into the country's capital. Alexandria is still Egypt's second-biggest city after Cairo, the modern capital.

Alexandria is a popular seaside resort. The city has lovely beaches and cool sea breezes. In the summer, people come to escape the heat of the Nile Valley.

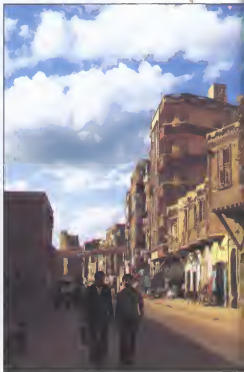
Alexander the Great was a Greek from Macedonia. The city named for him still serves the best Greek food in Egypt. It is also known for its seafood. Grilled shrimp with lemon is a local favorite.

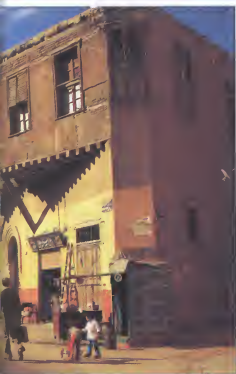
▽ **A caleche driver with his passengers** Touring Alexandria in a *caleche*, a comfortable horse-drawn carriage, can be fun.



▷ **Fort Qait Bay overlooking Alexandria's eastern harbor** The fort stands on the site of the old Pharos Lighthouse, one of the famous Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

▽ **A street scene in the center of Alexandria** Many of the buildings date from the 1800s and look very European in style.





From 304 to 30 B.C. Egypt was ruled by a series of kings, all called Ptolemy, and their queens. They made Alexandria a great center of culture and learning in the ancient world. The Ptolemies built palaces, a museum, and a world-famous library. The last of these rulers was the famous Queen Cleopatra.

A Roman theater, discovered less than fifty years ago, is one of the few ancient buildings left in the city. The semicircular arena is made of layers of brick and stone. It seated about 800 spectators.

The town of Rosetta (or Rasheed) is on the edge of the Nile Delta to the east of Alexandria. In Rosetta, in 1799, French soldiers from Napoleon Bonaparte's army found a stone covered with both Greek words and hieroglyphs. *Hieroglyphs* are the picture signs used as writing by the ancient Egyptians. The "Rosetta Stone" made it possible for experts to translate, or decipher, ancient Egyptian writing.



## DESERT SAFARI

**F**ar out in the Western Desert, near Egypt's border with Libya, is the little oasis town of Sîwa. An oasis is an area of the desert where the ground is wet and fertile. At Sîwa there is both fresh and salt water. Date palms grow here. In summer the heat is fierce. Winter brings chilling winds to the town.

▼ **A cobra** There are snakes living in the Nile Valley as well as in the desert.



Sîwans have their own customs and their own language. The women cover themselves in robes from head to foot. They wear heavy silver jewelry. Sîwans consider silver more valuable than gold.

If you look south from a hill near the oasis, you see the Great Sand Sea reaching into the distance. The huge sand dunes are beautiful but dangerous. About 2,500 years ago, the Persian army tried to cross this desert. These soldiers were never seen again.

The desert oases were beyond the reach of tourists until recently. Today, buses run between most of the oasis towns. Much of the desert you cross is not sand but gravel-covered plains. The rocky White Desert, which is between Bahariya and Farâfra Oases, magically changes color. It appears white at dawn, then turns golden, and finally purple at night. Plants grow around the oases, but you are unlikely to see crocodiles, ostriches, or other animals there.

Bahariya and Farâfra both have hot-water springs, where you can bathe. Farâfra is tiny. The people of this desert village earn their living by selling their crops of dates and olives in distant markets.

Dakhla and Kharga, to the southeast, are much bigger and more built up. Kharga lies on the old Forty Days Road. This was the route that was once taken by slave traders. They crossed the desert with their camels from Sudan on their way to the Nile Valley.





❏ **Mut town at Dakhla Oasis** The pace of life is slow and the people are very friendly to visitors.

▽ **Dakhla Oasis** By using irrigation, Egyptians reclaim land from the desert for farming.





## GATEWAY TO ASIA

**N**ear the modern town of Zagazig, in the eastern Nile Delta, lie the ruins of Bubastis. Bubastis was founded about 4,000 years ago. It was named for the goddess Bastet. In Egyptian art and sculpture, Bastet is often shown as a cat. The Egyptians were the first people to domesticate cats. Some cat owners even mummified their pets when they died.

During the reign of pharaoh Ramses II, workers dug a canal close to Bubastis that linked the Nile River with the Red Sea. Later rulers reopened and extended the old canal. Egypt became the gateway for trade between the Mediterranean and Asia.

Today, the Suez Canal links the Mediterranean directly with the Red Sea without the help of the Nile. The modern canal was built by Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French engineer and diplomat. Digging began in 1859. The work was not completed until 1869.

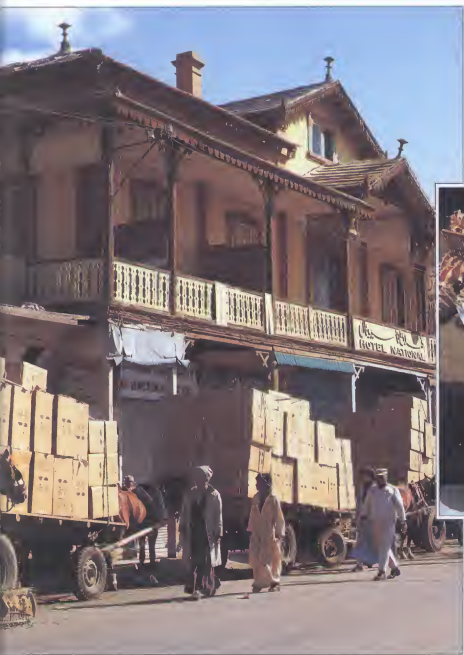
De Lesseps lived at Ismailia. You can still visit the large house that was his home. Like Ismailia, the waterfront town of Port Said was built around the time of the canal. Port Said stands at the northern end of the canal at the entrance to the Mediterranean. In its early days, it was a den of smugglers. Today, much of the town is rebuilt. It has become a popular summer resort.

At the southern entrance to the canal is the city of Suez. It was once the center of the old spice trade with Asia. Since the Middle

Ages, Muslim pilgrims have passed through here on their way to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Oil refineries and chemical plants ring the modern city. Farther down the Red Sea coast is Hurghada. At this popular resort scuba divers explore beautiful coral reefs.

▽ **Suez Canal** Every day, up to seventy-six ships pass through the 118-mile (190-kilometer) man-made waterway.





◁ **Port Said** The town was damaged during a war with Israel in 1967. It has since been rebuilt, but has much of the character of an old port.



△ **Seashells for sale at Hurghada** The resort lies on a bay that has a coral island at its center. Here, colorful shells cover the seabed. All kinds of fish from the bay can be seen in Hurghada's aquarium.



## HOME OF THE BEDOUIN

**M**ost of the people who live on the Sinai Peninsula are Bedouin. The Bedouin were Arab tribes who pitched their tents around the oases. Throughout the year they roamed the desert in search of plants to feed their sheep and goats. These fierce and proud people counted their wealth by the number of camels they owned.

The Bedouin make up only a tiny part of Egypt's population. Their nomadic, or roaming, way of life is slowly disappearing. Today many Bedouin are settled. You will more often see them driving a taxi or truck than riding a camel. Some also work as tour guides. They lead camel expeditions or Jeep safari parties across the craggy wilderness of southern Sinai to remote village oases.

▽ **A Bedouin father with his children** Many Bedouin families in Sinai now live in stone huts rather than in goatskin tents.



▽ Mount Catherine It takes five or six hours of hard walking to reach the summit of Egypt's highest mountain.



△ Bedouin making coffee at Feiran Oasis, near Mount Sinai  
The Bedouin are good hosts, but guests who stay too long are as welcome "as the spotted snake."

Saint Catherine's Monastery stands beneath Mount Sinai. Moses is said to have heard God speak to him from a burning bush in this valley. The monastery is home to Arab mosaics, illuminated manuscripts, and other priceless works of art.

The way to the monastery from the ancient turquoise mines leads through Wady el Raha Pass. Nearby there is a sacred tomb. Every summer, on the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the Bedouin gather for a *moulid*, or festival, at this tomb. They rub tomb dust on their bodies for good luck. They also race camels and feast on roast camel stuffed with lamb.

The Gulf of Aqaba, on the east coast of the Sinai Peninsula, is a marvelous place for underwater swimming. Here you can explore the fantastic coral reefs in clear waters crowded with brightly colored tropical fish. There can be no better way to relax at the end of your tour of the beautiful and ancient land of Egypt.

# EGYPT FACTS AND FIGURES

## People

Most Egyptians are of mixed race. They are descended from the Arabs and also from the ancient Egyptians, Berbers, Greeks, Turks, and other races. The Nubians, in the south of Egypt, are a largely separate people with their own language. The Bedouin, who live on the Sinai Peninsula and in mainland deserts, are mostly of Arab descent.

## Trade and Industry

Oil from the Gulf of Suez and Sinai makes up about half of Egypt's exports. Tourism and tolls on ships using the Suez Canal also bring in money from abroad. The cities of Cairo and Alexandria are the main industrial centers. Factories and mines produce phosphates, coal, manganese, iron, steel, and aluminum.

Cotton is Egypt's most important export crop. Egypt and Sudan together grow one-third of all the cotton in Africa.

Egypt has to buy about two-thirds of its food supply from other countries and needs to borrow money from abroad.



△ **Imbaba camel market, Cairo** Here, twice a week, camels are bought and sold or exchanged for sheep and goats.

## Fishing

Egyptians fish in the Mediterranean Sea for fish, shellfish, and squid. However, since the building of the Aswân High Dam across the Nile, there have been fewer fish to catch. This may be because the dam has affected sea currents along the coast. Lake Nasser has been stocked with fish. Freshwater fish also live in the Nile Delta lagoons. Deep-sea fishing in the Red Sea is popular.

## Food

The Egyptian people eat more *ful* than any other kind of food. *Ful* is a kind of broad bean. Egyptian popular dishes include: *Ful medames*: the beans are cooked and served with olive or corn oil, lemon juice, and spices. *Tameya*: deep fried and seasoned *ful* patties. They are served in pita bread with salad and pickles. *Shish kabab*: grilled pieces of meat, which are usually served with a spicy sauce and pita bread.

*Hummus*: a paste made from mashed chick-peas. It is often used as a spread. *Sharwama* or *Shawermah*: thin slices of pressed, roasted lamb flavored with

seasoning, eaten in a sandwich. *Hamam*: pigeon, either grilled and served with wheat stuffing, or stewed with onions, tomatoes, and rice in an earthenware pot called a *tajine*. *Umm ali*: bread pudding in milk, with coconut and cinnamon. The Egyptians like tea more than any other drink. They like it strong and very sweet. Coffee is served strong, without milk, and sweet or bitter (without sugar).



## Farming

Only about four percent of Egypt's land is suitable for farming. Lake Nasser, behind the Aswân High Dam, now provides water all year round so that crops can be harvested two or three times a year. The dam has also made it possible to irrigate, or water, large areas of desert that can be used for farming.

The use of modern chemicals has led to better harvests, especially of cash crops, such as cotton. Most cotton is grown in the Nile Delta, which has the richest farming land. Only about a quarter of the land is used for growing food. Rice, maize, wheat, beans, millet, and dates are among Egypt's major food crops. In some regions, olives are an important crop and source of income for farmers.

Farmers also grow potatoes, tomatoes, other vegetables, and all kinds of fruits. Some of this food is sold to other countries. Most farmers also keep water buffalo or dairy cattle. These animals can pull a plow or turn a waterwheel as well as provide milk.



△ Wall painting from Horemheb's tomb in the Valley of the Kings The pharaoh is shown with the goddess Isis.

## Schools

Children must go to school between the ages of six and fourteen. There are free state schools, as well as private and religious schools. After elementary school, children take an exam before going on to intermediate school. They can then, if they wish, enroll in a secondary or high school. Afterward, some continue at one of the 18 public universities or several colleges.

## The Media

Egypt has state-run national TV channels and regional channels. There are also state-run and private satellite channels. Until 2003, the government owned all the radio stations in Egypt. Since then, there are some private music stations. There are several newspapers published in Egypt. The oldest is *Al-Ahram*. Some newspapers, such as the *Egyptian Gazette* are published in English. More than six million Egyptians use the Internet. Egypt has TV and film studios that supply much of the Arab-speaking world with movies and TV shows.

## Art and Drama

Ancient Egyptian sculptors used all kinds of materials as well as precious metals. Painting, on the walls of temples and tombs, was bright and colorful. The heads of the figures, but not the eyes or the shoulders, were shown in profile.

Egypt's most famous actor is Omar Sharif, star of the well-known films *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*.

# EGYPT FACTS AND FIGURES

## Music

Egyptian music is different in each region. Horses are trained to dance to *sa'idi*, the music of the Nile Valley. *Sa'idi* uses the *naharsan*, a kind of drum. *Fallahi* comes from the Delta area, *sawahlee* from the Mediterranean coast. Nubian music reflects various African styles.

## Religion

Islam, the religion of the Muslims, came to Egypt with the Arabs in A.D. 640. Muslims believe that Muhammad, a man born in Mecca around A.D. 570, was the final prophet of God. Muslims pray five times a day, and fast throughout *Ramadan*, the ninth month in the Muslim calendar. The *Koran* is their holy book. Many Muslims perform *Hadj*, a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, at least once in their lifetime.

## Festivals

Muslim festivals and *moulsids* can be huge gatherings. At the center of many is the *zikk*, the honoring of God, through prayer and by the reciting of the *Koran*.



△ A female mummy From about 2900 B.C. the bodies of dead kings and queens were dried out and bandaged to preserve them.

Some important festivals are:

**Ramadan** During this month, Muslims fast from before dawn until after sunset. A three-day holiday called 'Id al-Fitr follows.

**Moulid al-Nabi** (in July or August) Muhammad's birthday is an occasion for street processions in many towns and cities.

**'Id al-Adha** A celebration to honor the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command.

## Plants

Papyrus, a plant used to make the first form of paper, was once common along the banks of the Nile. Now it grows only in the extreme southern part of the country. Grasses and mimosa shrubs grow in some desert regions. Date palms grow in the oases and the Nile Valley.

## Animals

Birds of the Nile Valley and Delta include turtle-doves, bluetheats, redstarts, stonechats, as well as

water birds such as ibises, storks, and the great crested grebe. Birds of prey include falcons and kestrels. The Nile crocodile grows up to 14 feet

(4 meters) long. Wildcats and mongooses live in the Delta. Gazelles, hyenas, jackals, scorpions, and all kinds of insects live in the desert. Snakes include the deadly carpet viper and the Egyptian cobra.

## Sports

Soccer is Egypt's national sport. Horse races and camel races take place in the desert. Tourists enjoy scuba diving, snorkeling, and deep-sea fishing.



## HISTORY

Stone Age people lived in Egypt 250,000 years ago. By 4000 B.C., two kingdoms had grown up—one in the Nile Valley (Upper Egypt), the other in the Nile Delta (Lower Egypt). About 3100 B.C., the two kingdoms were united under the ruler Menes. For most of the next 2,500 years Egypt was ruled by kings called pharaohs. The pharaohs built a great empire and conquered neighboring countries. In 525 B.C., the Persians invaded Egypt, followed by the Greeks, and then the

Romans, who became Christians. In the 7th century A.D., Egypt was conquered by the Arab rulers from Damascus, who introduced Islam. Later, the Fatimids from North Africa invaded and built Cairo as their capital. In 1171, Saladin, who spent most of his time fighting the Crusaders, became ruler. By the 1500s, Egypt had become a province of the Ottoman Turks. World War I (1914-1918) ended the Ottoman Empire, leaving Egypt with its own king but under the control of Britain. In

1952, a group of Egyptian army officers seized power, declaring Egypt a republic. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser became the country's first president in 1956 and ruled until 1970. Egypt gained control of the Suez Canal from Britain in 1956. Two wars with Israel followed, in 1967 and 1973. The Israelis seized Sinai, but President Anwar Sadat, Egypt's leader from 1970 to 1981, made a deal with Israel for its return. Sadat was assassinated in 1981. His place as president was taken by Hosny Mubarak.

## LANGUAGE

Egypt's official language is Arabic. Arabic is spoken by most of the people of North Africa and West Asia. The spoken language can differ from country to country, but the written language remains the same.

Unlike English, Arabic is written from right to left, and has its own alphabet. Although Arabic was brought to Egypt from outside, some people think the Arabic alphabet was developed from the signs of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic, or picture, writing.

### Useful words and phrases

English	Arabic
Zero	<i>sifr</i>
One	<i>wahid</i>
Two	<i>ithnayn</i>
Three	<i>talaata</i>
Four	<i>arb'a</i>
Five	<i>khamisa</i>
Six	<i>sitta</i>
Seven	<i>sab'a</i>
Eight	<i>tamanya</i>
Nine	<i>tes'a</i>
Ten	<i>'ashara</i>
Sunday	<i>youm il-ahad</i>
Monday	<i>youm il-ithnayn</i>
Tuesday	<i>youm al-talaat</i>

### Useful words and phrases

English	Arabic
Wednesday	<i>youm il-arb'a</i>
Thursday	<i>youm il-khamees</i>
Friday	<i>youm il-gum'a</i>
Saturday	<i>youm is-sabt</i>
Good morning	<i>sabah il-kheer</i>
Good evening	<i>masa' il-kheer</i>
Good night	<i>tisbah 'ala-kheer</i>
Please	<i>min fadlak</i>
Thank you	<i>shokran</i>
Yes	<i>aiwa/na'am</i>
No	<i>la</i>
Can you speak English?	<i>titkalim ingleezy?</i>
Excuse me	<i>'an iznak</i>

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**Note:** Many Egyptian words have more than one spelling. For example, *Ramses* is often spelled *Ramesses*, and there are several correct spellings for names of foods.

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